DataLab Tables Library
Tutorial Script
2022-23 Data Collection Cycle

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) conducts several longitudinal studies for pre-K, primary, secondary and post-secondary education. The NCES DataLab provides a way for users to learn more about the individual surveys, search the tables library index, search and retrieve official statistical tables, and to use PowerStats to conduct analyses of their own.

To access the DataLab, type "DataLab" into the search bar in the right-hand corner of the NCES or IPEDS website. Now, select the first option, "DataLab Home."

The main page of DataLab highlights the various ways users can search for data.

The main box at the top of the screen provides a way for new users to learn more about the DataLab. You can select "About DataLab" (also as a link on the left side of the page) to better understand how you can use DataLab to answer questions about accessing data collected by NCES. This page highlights two key functions: the Tables Library and PowerStats. We can also visit the Learning Center to view examples of and instructions for conducting analyses in PowerStats. PowerStats is beyond the scope of this tutorial so be sure to visit the Learning Center for more information on this tool. Also on this page are any updates to the system as well as FAQs.

We can return to the DataLab Home at any time by clicking on the little home icon at the top left of the page.

The Learning Center, which was also accessible on the About DataLab page provides some additional training on how to use the DataLab by providing analysis examples and tutorials. If we scroll down to Analysis Examples and Tutorials, and then click on "Percentage Distribution" we are taken to a page that provides step-by-step instructions on how to create a percentage distribution table. From there we can open the table in PowerStats where we can then make changes to this table. If we return to the DataLab Learning Center we see that this page also provides a glossary of terms. If we click on any of these we get a short explanation of what the term means.

Returning to the DataLab home, we also see at the top right of the page any updates which include new tables that have been posted. More on the Data Tables Library in a moment.

The main portion of this page is dedicated to the various longitudinal surveys that NCES conducts. Here you can look for surveys by population or by topic. You can also check the box if you only want to view surveys for which study data for multiple years is available. When we look at the various surveys and studies below, you have the option to favorite them. For this tutorial we are going to select the

Baccalaureate and Beyond Survey, also known as B&B. If I am already familiar with the survey I can simply move to the right of the screen and select the survey year and launch PowerStats. If I am not familiar and want to know more I can click on the plus sign to learn more about the study. We see a quick summary about B&B, the population included in the survey, codebooks we can access, keywords, and the various types of analysis that are available. From there we can launch PowerStats to begin our analysis. While this tutorial does not cover the use of PowerStats, more information can be found in the DataLab Learning Center.

On the left side of the page we see a tab for the Tables Library. The Tables Library allows user to browse, view, and save data tables featured in NCES publications. The search box allows you to search for tables using either a keyword, a publication title, or a table ID. On the right-hand side you can let the system know whether you are interested in tables or publications.

You can also filter results by topic, sources, and/or data release year. The Filter by Topic allows you to search for tables using 12 designated categories. Each of the categories will have additional sub-categories. Let's scroll though these to get a sense of what topics are covered. You may also narrow your search for a specific data source. NCES provides six designated data sources for the search, including IPEDS — the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. You may also narrow your search using a designated time frame of release years. Pre-set time frames are provided by the search engine.

This page is organized by latest releases, although you can sort by publication number, release date, or publication title.

The sixth publication down looks at six-year persistence and attainment. Let's click on that to learn more. There are various tables associated with this publication. The first looks at percent distribution of attainment and retention by selected personal characteristics. To the right we see that we can view the table. Let's select that to learn more.

On the top right we can "View More" and "Download". By default, we will begin at "View Table."

The view always begins with the table estimates. However, we can easily switch our view to obtain standard errors. For now, let's look at estimates.

When we view the tables we see that the rows are the personal characteristics and the columns are the distribution of retention status.

If we click on "View More" at the top we can view related tables, view the related report, and view the study website. This is handy for learning more about the topic.

If we click on "Download" we see that we can download the table in Excel format. We can choose to download the actual estimates or select the link to download the standard errors. Please note that all data sources notes are included in the file. The last option will allow you to download the table specification files. Those files enable a user's replication of the table using PowerStats and may allow a user to create customized adjustments of the relevant table. This function is beyond the scope of this tutorial. To learn more about PowerStats you can click on the link to the DataLab

in the top right of the page.

Let's go back to the "DataLab Tables Library" main screen.

This time, we would like to search for tables associated with student debt. Well simply type the expression "debt" into the search field.

NCES' search engine offers us more than 1,600 tables that would fit the search. In addition, it offers additional keywords that may be used under "View results for all the related search terms below." Clearly, the number of tables offered is too large. We'll narrow the list using the filters below.

We are interested in the debt or borrowing burden of recent baccalaureate degree graduates. For that reason, we'll select Baccalaureate and Beyond as our data source. This is a longitudinal survey conducted by NCES of recent baccalaureate degree graduates.

We see there are now 177 tables found. We could narrow this further by filtering by release year. To determine the most recent data collection for any given survey you can visit the study website accessible on the main DataLab homepage.

Let's look at the third table in the search.

The table is titled " CUMULATIVE AMOUNT BORROWED: Percentage of 2007–08 bachelor's degree recipients who borrowed to finance their undergraduate or graduate postsecondary education and, among borrowers, amount borrowed and average monthly payment amount, by student loan source, enrollment, employment, and demographic characteristics in 2018".

We can see that the at the bachelor's degree institution control, the percent who borrowed, and the amount borrowed vary based on institution sector. Those at private for-profit colleges borrowed the most, while those at public colleges borrowed the least, on average. We can scroll down to see borrowing by other enrollment, employment, and demographic characteristics.

Once again, using the menu at the top, we may download the information or access additional sources including reports associated with the table.

Let's go back to the main screen and use the function "Filter Results by Topic."

To maintain our example, focus, we will explore the topic "Cost of Attendance and Prices Charged."

In this topic, we have sub-categories that may be selected. We will pick "average net price". In parenthesis, NCES elaborates that this topic addresses the "total cost of attendance minus all grants and scholarships". DataLab Tables Library suggests that 57 tables may be a direct fit to our subject area.

Let's explore the table, "Estimates for Figure 7. DEPENDENT UNDERGRADUATE OUT-OF-POCKET NET PRICE MINUS ALL AID, BY INSTITUTION CONTROL AND LEVEL Average out-of-pocket net price minus all aid for full-time, full-year dependent undergraduates, by institution control and level and family income: 2015–16."

This table provides an overview of the average out-of-pocket net price of college attendance by sector of institution (public, private nonprofit, and private for-profit), by level of institution (2-year vs. 4-year) and by family income quartiles. As noted on the table's title, it refers to the price of attendance minus total aid among all undergraduates.

This table can also be downloaded and further explored. It is very useful to explore the table and its source by clicking on "View More" and then "View Study Website" to learn more about NPSAS, which stands for National Postsecondary Student Aid Study.

At the bottom of the screen you'll notice a link to two additional data collections of NCES that may be relevant, the Beginning Postsecondary Students Study (BPS) and Baccalaureate and Beyond (B&B).

In this overview video, we have explored the functionality and data available in the DataLab. The DataLab Tables Library allows users to explore a topic area using multiple sources. We identified two unique ways to explore data in the DataLab Tables Library: keyword search and explore by topic. In addition, we saw two unique data sources for each topic: B&B—Baccalaureate and Beyond—focusing on students who completed their degree; and NPSAS—National Postsecondary Student Aid Study—focusing on aid recipients. These three sources together allow us to build a comprehensive view of various topics.

We encourage you to choose a topic and further explore the functionality of the DataLab.